

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349006300>

Let's be strong, we all Tigrayans suffer together; this too shall pass soon!

Preprint · February 2021

CITATIONS

0

READS

5

1 author:



Jan Nyssen

Ghent University

557 PUBLICATIONS 12,903 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



BDU-IUC Project 3 = Water management and its implications to the hydro-system dynamics in the Tana-Beles area, Upper Blue Nile basin [View project](#)



Land cover change and water balance modelling in the Afro-alpine environment of Mt. Guna: Ethiopia. [View project](#)

Let's be strong, we all Tigrayans suffer together; this too shall pass soon!

In Tigrinya language, this concept needs just two words: አյόና፡ ተንተሩ፡ [ajóna tigáru]

Jan Nyssen

To be cited as:

Nyssen, J., 2021. Let's be strong, we all Tigrayans suffer together; this too shall pass soon! Draft paper, 3 February 2021.

Introduction

On 17 November 2021, we published an article “Ethiopia’s Tigray region has seen famine before: why it could happen again” in The Conversation.¹ Unfortunately, it was a premonitory paper: early February 2021, except for Mekelle, and a few areas that are now controlled by the Amhara region,² the large majority of Tigrayan people has no access to humanitarian aid, medical services and telecommunication. They also are suffering huge war damage, including civilian victims, looting, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence and abduction.

In a follow-up paper,³ I mentioned “አይነትም፡”, “**be strong**”, not as free talk, but as a commitment. Over these months, and in line with the remarkably fine-touched paper by Saba of Axsum “Don’t call me Woyane. I don’t deserve it”,⁴ my mindset evolved towards “አይችሁ፡”, “**let us be strong**”, associating myself more and more with the victims, the people in my village in Tembien,⁵ and well beyond.

This article is the January 2021 diary of my commitment as part of a large group of international scientists for the millions of poor people who suffer enormously these days: the human rights and humanitarian situation in Tigray stays very bad and worsens. The international community, including now also France⁶ that long remained insensitive to Tigray’s suffering, reacts but so far it remains at the level of “strong words”. The latest statement by the UN Secretary General ends with a “call to the Government [of Ethiopia] for sustained, impartial and unimpeded humanitarian access to affected areas in the Tigray region and to internally displaced persons and refugee camps”.⁷

Summary

1. Starvation in Tigray
2. “Fake news”
3. The Aksum massacre
4. Sexual violence
5. Mekelle and surroundings
6. Irob and Gulomakheda
7. Eritrea and Tigray
8. Destruction of religious and cultural heritage
9. The voice of senior Tigrayan leaders
10. International dimensions
11. Grassroots solidarity

12. Acknowledgments

- Annex 1: Opinion pieces
- Annex 2: In the media
- Notes

1. Starvation in Tigray

The **minutes** of the 8 January meeting of the Tigray **Emergency Coordination Centre** were leaked. More precisely, this was a meeting organized by the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) of the UN and different Humanitarian Organizations with a presence in Tigray (MSF, Red Cross, CRS, Norwegian Church Aid etc.). The minutes document that most administrators belonging to the Transitional Government of Tigray participated in the meeting.

What is reported is **catastrophic, worse even than we anticipated**. People in Tigray are dying in the street. Very little is done outside of Mekelle. “We are not able to reach 99% of the people in need”. This report is on the desk in all UN agencies, and partly used for formal reporting such as a recent UN’s assessment of the situation in Tigray.⁸ On 15 January, the EU also confirmed that unless there is access for humanitarian aid operators, the EU will not disburse the planned budget support to the Ethiopian government.⁹

The leaked minutes have well found their way in the media, such as the Washington Post: ‘Extreme urgent need’: Starvation haunts Ethiopia’s Tigray.¹⁰ The journalist triangulated the information of the report with several international NGOs.

Weeks after this ECC meeting, the situation has not improved. In many villages and towns, there are no operating mills so people can’t make bread or *tayta* (fermented flatbread, also called *injera*); people are living on roasted barley and whatever else they can find.

Traditional grinding of grain is between two stones shaped for that purpose, but many homesteads do not have such stones anymore, and certainly not the numerous internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹¹ Two eyewitnesses tell us that people go to bushlands and collect branches and leaves of non-toxic thirst-quenching plants in order to have at least something in their stomach. Such as *UUP* [hehot] (sorrel or *Rumex nervosus*) for instance.¹² In some places there are even no more matches available to light a fire for cooking.

In Hawzien and Gheralta, where there is ongoing warfare, there is lots of looting, and damage to some of the historical rock-hewn churches. In such locations, especially young men are not safe, even in civilian clothes, as they are suspected to be a TDF (Tigray Defence Forces) guerilla fighter. By mid-January, an eyewitness from Inticho reported “Those who don’t have cattle already died”.

Eyewitnesses in Adigrat, where intermittent telephone communications are possible now, tell that the men have fled to the mountains for fear of being killed. They shelter in caves, gorges and forests, but not in churches because those are not considered safe anymore. From there, many join the TDF army. A Tigrayan in Belgium mentions that he expects many friends and relatives have been killed. But it’s a culture in Tigray not to tell death of relatives to someone overseas. Yet, some are now preferring to inform so that people don’t face

shocking social media posts reporting a friend or relative to have been killed. For instance, a Tigrayan student in Belgium learnt that there have been large massacres in their village with an uncle and two cousins killed. The student concludes: “I am overdosed with worries for my friends or relatives. A stronger worry is now for the society at large!”

The situation is well summarised by The Economist, 21/1/2021: Ethiopia’s government appears to be wielding **hunger as a weapon**,¹³ and a second article on 22/1/2022: After two months of war, Tigray faces starvation.¹⁴ Besides the huge obstacles to deliver aid, as shown on OCHA’s map of the (poor) accessibility for humanitarian aid to Tigray,¹⁵ at least part of it seems also to be forwarded to the Eritrean army, which has been spotted supervising the unloading in Shire for instance.

On 15 January, EU commissioner Josep Borrell stated: “I have passed a clear message to the Ethiopian leadership: we are ready to help, but unless there is access for humanitarian aid operators, the EU cannot disburse the planned budget support to the Ethiopian government.”¹⁶

Borreli’s statement is reworded by the Ethiopian authorities as follows: “Both the Deputy Prime Minister and the High Representative have agreed to continue to work closely to scale-up the efforts in the provision of humanitarian assistance in the region and strengthen the closer collaboration between Ethiopian and the European Union.”¹⁷

The EU announced on 19 January that it is also to dispatch a humanitarian negotiator to Ethiopia¹⁸ (the Finnish minister of Foreign Affairs, Pekka Haavisto),¹⁹ after the suspension of European budget aid to Ethiopia. We should stress that this is not about development aid, but a lump sum that is a direct contribution to the Ethiopian government’s budget. The government is lacking financial resources due to this war, as is also evidenced by the fact that all over the country civil servants’ salaries are reduced in order to fund the war. The sooner the war stops, the better for all people of Ethiopia who are facing inflation, soldiers killed, and salary cuts.

On 1 February, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) mentions that access is limited in rural areas, where 80% of the Tigrayans live and that host many additional IDPs.²⁰ Lorries with aid are ready for Tigray, but staff needed for distributions is not allowed in the region: “A large number of humanitarian staff are waiting in Addis Ababa, ready to move into Tigray, and the Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA continue working closely with the Ministry of Peace to make sure UN agencies and NGOs receive clearance to travel to the region.” Food is available, but *de facto* the humanitarian corridor continues to be blocked.

On 1 February, the Norwegian Refugee Council unfortunately again had to stress through a statement by its’ Secretary General Jan Egeland that aid is still not reaching Tigray.²¹ Response of a disabused Tigrayan: “Thank you for being candid. The truth is that humanitarian aid is the last card the invading forces want to use in the project of Tigray genocide. The first part was to destroy the livelihood of the people. The international community has failed to read the intention and act.”²²

Personally, ever since I started carrying out research in Tigray in 1994, I observed that the **fight against famine was a major priority**; with many colleagues we tried to contribute to this through studies and projects for environmental conservation. Now we are back “there”!

2. “It’s just fake news”, or “please take the Ethiopian government’s perspective”...

Followers of the Ethiopian government tend to send out messages like: “This peace operation is finished since two months, the government did what it had to do, all is well now”. A business traveller who was on a short mission to Ethiopia said “my taxi driver told me that it is all over now, there is full peace in Tigray, everybody is happy”. These statements translate the official view of the Ethiopian government.²³

Yet, on 26 January, the EU Joint Development & Foreign Affairs Parliament Committee gave a hard time to the Ethiopian Ambassador Hirut Zemene in relation to the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, who called for ‘perspective’ over the Tigray crisis.²⁴

The Ambassador’s speech was echoed in an opinion paper by Jon Abbink, in which he minimises civilian suffering, for sure without having contacted people on the ground in Tigray.²⁵ Our friend, medical doctor André Crismer wrote the following letter to Prof. Abbink:

Dear sir,

I’ve read with interest your paper in theglobalobservatory.org.

As a medical doctor, I’ve known Tigray since 1987: there has been no mass starvation since Mengistu’s time; The risk is presently very real! I’ve seen huge developments in health centres, hospitals, schools, soil protection, people enjoying peace, 20 years gain in life expectancy !

I now receive many information from friends living in Tigray who are not TPLF members : they speak about murders, sexual violence, generalized looting (house by house, schools, hospitals, churches...), lack of food, lack of medicine...

Obviously there was disagreement between TPLF leaders and Abiy and a huge lack of dialogue.

I write, trying to be on the side of the civilian victims. It seems you have chosen your camp. I’m not sure the situation is as simple as you describe it.

Sincerely,

Andre Crismer

No answer was received by André. His worries and pain are confirmed by MSF (Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders) and UNICEF.²⁶ And, in the meantime, a very graphic video has emerged showing the killing of kids in downtown Mekelle on 28 November 2020.²⁷

3. The Aksum and Wuqro massacres

Through short phone calls (people are afraid to speak on the phone) with friends who came from Aksum to Mekelle, the information that people got killed at Maryam Tsiyon, the most important church of Ethiopian Christianity, is confirmed. People were separately engaged in collecting dead bodies from different areas and buried them hastily.

An interview has been published with a traumatised witness regarding the Aksum massacre. It's an 80 minutes phone interview in Amharic with a U.S. resident of Ethiopian origin. She witnessed the murders in Aksum, was evacuated as a foreign national and is now in the U.S.A. She went to Aksum to visit the church. She says the killings committed by Eritrean forces were not only in the church but also random shootings in the streets, in open shops, in homes. She says that nearby villages have also been the subject of similar shootings. She is clearly moved and traumatised (cf. 18').²⁸ The interview goes a little bit in all directions. The interviewer tries to focus the interviewee's remarks on the chronology, on the establishing of the facts she experienced, which she witnessed.

Videos are now also emerging of the shelling of **Wuqro** between 22 and 27 November, in which 300 civilians perished.²⁹ We note that such films took two months to emerge. At least people managed to salvage the documentation, despite efforts of the army to confiscate mobile phones and erase documentation.

The Chinese website youUAV.com comes with full details on how Chinese-made **armed drones** carried out these and other bombings on Tigrayan towns and defence forces.³⁰ The drones were directly deployed by the United Arab Emirates, from their base in Assab (Eritrea).

4. Sexual violence

Evidence of rape is increasingly reported: "This is what Eritrean soldiers usually do, when you do not want to give them your belongings. They shoot you down on the spot. Soldiers from the Ethiopian army (ENDF) do not loot. But they do rape. They rape women in front of their husbands."³¹ And also Reuters (22 January): 'Choose - I kill you or rape you': abuse accusations surge in Ethiopia's war.³²

Internationally, this is taken very seriously: on 21 January 2021, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on **Sexual Violence in Conflict**, Pramila Patten, urged all parties to prohibit the use of sexual violence and cease hostilities in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.³³

A summary of Patten's statement:³⁴ very serious allegations of rape are being reported, especially in Mekelle. The UN has heard that military elements are forcing women to trade sex for basic commodities (food, water, toiletries). And that there is an increased demand for contraceptives.

On top of women being forced into prostitution, there are serious allegations that men have been forced to rape family members under threat of violence.

In addition to the aforementioned sexual crimes, the UN is receiving numerous reports of Eritrean refugee camps suffering an increasing number of rapes against women and girls. 5000 Eritrean refugees have made their way to Shire and are sleeping rough to avoid abuse.

The UN calls for an immediate end to sexual violence and demands free access to all sections of Tigray in order to provide aid to those in need and also to bring perpetrators of rape to justice.

The Ethiopian army seems to realise that these acts undermine support by its own public opinion and established a taskforce to investigate the raised concern over sexual violence in Tigray.³⁵

5. Mekelle and surroundings

On the telephone, one friend could confirm that things are getting a little better in Mekelle. Banks have opened, cafes and hotels are opening slowly. Civil servants have started to get back to work despite not receiving regular salaries. There has also been food assistance to around 70,000 people through *tabya* (sub-district) offices (30 kg wheat per person + oil). Out of Mekelle, it is much as before with nothing of everything. Our friend said he had heard that electricity had been restored around 25 January in Shire and Axum (Adigrat around 15 January). But that there is still not any telephone connection outside of Mekelle and recently Adigrat.

When people go to Mekelle, often on foot, they interact with a **flexible politico-military environment**. For instance, a town like Adwa nominally under ENDF control, has no administrative bodies; it can be 3-4 days without presence of military. The villages surrounding the town are a kind of no-man's land. The army is not there, but an Eritrean or ENDF military unit may decide to go to control a village or for looting. People then again move further into areas without roads. Some 20-25 km away from the town they will feel safe. The Tigray Defence Forces are there and the army cannot come. Such places count a lot of IDPs who moved there to be safe from Ethiopian and Eritrean armies. When approaching Mekelle, the army is again occasionally present, with the city fully under control of ENDF and Eritrean soldiers. Our eyewitnesses frequently mentions these Eritrean soldiers, not only for killing, but also with contingents regularly changed to avoid "bonding" with the local people, infighting with ENDF, wearing Ethiopian and Tigrayan uniforms, etc.

When telephoning Mekelle, we hear about daily killings by shooting. Military sometimes also rob people's money and mobile phones at gunpoint. Among many others, Journalist Dawit Kebede (Tigray TV) has been shot dead in Mekelle, together with his lawyer, upon release from police custody.³⁶ We were in contact with a close friend who lives near Maryam church in Mekelle: she is terrorised and terrified after witnessing a scene in front of her door: two Eritrean soldiers shot a young man. One said, "Finish him!". The other: "Let him agonise." What the young man has done with terrible moans.

Talk of the town, by this beginning of February 2021 are Tigray president Debretsiion's recent speech, and the fear that Eritrea plans to send another 200 000 soldiers for a new offensive with the aim of eradicating all educated men who do not explicitly oppose the TPLF party,³⁷ in line with Dawit Kebede's murder.



Internally displaced persons from Western Tigray are sheltered in schools in Mekelle ©NTK

6. The plight in Irob and Gulomakeda woredas

Kjetil Tronvoll notes that as all minorities, the Irob minority group in Tigray is particularly vulnerable in the war as it straddles the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, and part of its homeland was granted to Eritrea by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. Killings, looting and coercive «re-identification» as Eritreans are reported.³⁸

We had a telephone contact with an older man from an Irob village. He confirmed that Eritrean identity cards are being handed out. Literally everything has been stolen. People only have the clothes that they are wearing. Many have fled to the mountains and are hiding in caves (just like 20 years ago). There's no food, no money. Two of his grandchildren were killed. He had come to Mekelle to collect cash and buy some food. Mekelle is 150 km from his village, but the closest place with functional banks – they can use the road when no local fighting is going on.

A dedicated lobbyist for the Eritrean regime, Bronwyn Bruton, while denegating Eritrean involvement against all evidence, recently justified the occupation and plight of the people in Irob and Gulomakeda woredas, stating that Eritrea was “just” occupying the contested border areas.³⁹ Note that Bruton works for the Atlantic Council, a think tank with financial backing of a Canadian mining firm, Nevsun, which operates exclusively in Eritrea.⁴⁰

7. Eritrea and Tigray

A colleague has managed to talk with one Eritrean refugee who came with his wife from Shemelba refugee camp in Tigray to Addis Ababa by bus on Saturday 16 January, as well as with another Eritrean refugee who arrived in Addis the same day from Hitsats camp. It seems there is nothing left of these two refugees camps after being looted and basically destroyed, as also documented by analysis of satellite imagery.⁴¹ The refugees have relocated to the two camps around May Tsebri (Adi Harush and May Ayni), or traveled to Addis Ababa or other places where they feel more safe. First, Eritrean soldiers came and tried to take those who were wanted by the Eritrean government for political reasons and eventually sent them back to Eritrea. Afterwards Tigrayan militia groups chased the Eritrean soldiers out. Several refugees were killed in these different skirmishes. The man also said he had never been so afraid in all his life. They had not had any food rations for 2-3 months: "We ate what we could find, even plants and leaves". On the travel to Addis, they had to pay much more than normal bus fare prices for the trip: 200 Birr from Sheleba to Shire, 1000 from Shire to Mekelle, and 1500 from Mekelle to Addis - per person. On December 9-11, Eritrean refugees who had fled to Gondar and Addis Ababa were forcefully escorted back to "their" camps in Tigray, with the apparent support of the International Organization for Migrations and escorted by Federal policemen.

There is also very strong language from UNHCR boss Filipo Grandi on the lack of access to the Shimelba and Hintsas refugee camps.⁴²

References to Eritrean participation in the war and atrocities committed should be understood as a characteristic of the regime, and its military indoctrination system: the infamous Sawa camp.⁴³ War crimes are committed by the Eritrean army in Tigray, and yet there are longstanding bonds among the Tigray and Eritrean people. For instance, in one month, three music works have been released by refugee Eritrean artists, disclosing pain related to the ongoing atrocities in Tigray: Kibrom Hailemariam and Luwam Brhane - Hatney⁴⁴; Yonas, Fnan, and Kubrom - Tigraway⁴⁵; and Kiflom Ykealo - Hizbi Tigray⁴⁶. Despite the ongoing atrocities by Eritrean soldiers, these songs show the dilemma that Eritreans are facing. Here, the singers express empathy, solidarity and brotherhood with Tigray.

8. Destruction of religious and cultural heritage

Besides Aksum and many other churches in Tigray,⁴⁷ the EEPA report for 14 January states that the 6th century monastery of Debre Damo was bombed using heavy artillery and looted by Eritrean troops. Also more detailed information is emerging on artefacts stolen from Negash mosque.⁴⁸

The researchers and fellows of the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies at Hamburg University have launched an **appeal for the salvation of the cultural heritage** of Tigray.⁴⁹ The Telegraph notes on 17/1/2021: churches and mosques in Tigray 'vandalised and looted' in Ethiopian purge.⁵⁰

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is silent on these destructions of its own churches. Patriarch Abune Mathias is reportedly not allowed to issue statements. An Ethiopian Catholic Church delegation visited its diocese in Adigrat, reporting damages to churches;⁵¹ buildings of Wukro St. Mary's Catholic College have been broken and looted, with computers stolen. At their meeting with the interim administration, government officials said 4.5 million people needed emergency support all over Tigray.

Such attacks on religious and cultural heritage sites have no precedents in the 17 years-long Ethiopian civil war of the 1980s. They seem to be part of a deliberate attempt to eradicate Tigray as a historical and cultural entity.

9. The voice of senior Tigrayan leaders

Tigray president and TPLF chairman Debrtsiyon's recent speech through Dimtsi Weyane TV⁵² has been much discussed and is also translated into English.⁵³ An exegesis of it would allow better understanding what people in Tigray describe as a game-changer; but maybe predominant is their relief that Debrtsiyon survived the armed drone attacks of November.⁵⁴ Also, as it is extremely rare to get a consistent and lengthy interview with somebody who lives the conditions of the areas under control of the Tigray government, we recommend listening to or reading the transcript of the call between colleagues Mulugeta Gebrehiwot (founder of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University; now in Tigray)⁵⁵ and Alex de Waal (World Peace Foundation),⁵⁶ that took place on 27 January 2021: "They have destroyed Tigray, literally".⁵⁷

10. International dimensions

The border conflict between Ethiopia and **Sudan** for the Al-Fashaga triangle continues,⁵⁸ with Sudan now controlling most of the area. On 16 January, the participation of Eritrean soldiers on the side of the Ethiopian army was mentioned.⁵⁹ Besides the Tigray war, the approximate controlled areas of this border war are also mapped by the Ethiopia Map team,⁶⁰ with many uncertainties. We had contact with Amhara militiamen who currently control Dansha (Western Tigray); they mentioned Sudanese incursions up to 40 km far "into Ethiopian territory".⁶¹ For them, the Sudanese incursions justified their recent attacks on Sudanese forces, including kidnapping of Sudanese farmers and investors.

Filling and operation of the GERD reservoir on the Blue Nile are another major source of conflict between Ethiopia, Sudan and **Egypt**, that has flared up since the Ethiopian army became stretched and weakened due to the war against Tigray.⁶²

Somalian mothers are protesting because they fear for their sons who had been sent to Eritrea for military training. Reportedly the Somali soldiers have been taken first to Eritrea and then to fight in Tigray, where some got killed.⁶³ Direct eyewitnesses from Hagere Selam inform me of the presence of Somali soldiers on the sides of the ENDF.

Diplomatic sources mention that there is a risk for an outright **regional war** in the Horn, involving Ethiopia and all neighbouring countries.

11. Grassroots solidarity

Tigrayan diaspora kids summarise the issues at stake and sing to stop the war in Tigray: We are the world - "a new song".⁶⁴

The scientists' appeal : "Tigray (Ethiopia) - In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985": by 29 January, 3103 scientists worldwide signed already.⁶⁵

And a recent initiative by younger colleagues: the new broad petition on Avaaz.org "Allow immediate and full humanitarian access and stop starvation in war-affected Tigray" in a dozen languages, signed by 3648 people on 3 February.⁶⁶

In the USA, 420 returned Peace Corps Volunteers published an open letter to the members of the 117th United States Congress, asking for public condemnation of the violence that is occurring throughout Ethiopia and for support to a peaceful resolution to the war in Tigray.⁶⁷

12. Acknowledgments

Thank you to all who contribute to this effort for peace and humanitarian aid to Tigray: contacting academics, distributing petitions, translating, initiating them. Thanks for media contacts, witnesses, database handler, twitterers, text reviewers, PR with politicians, needs assessment, NGO activities, documentation of war crimes in view of future court cases (ICC, Belgian or German courts), ...

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Related opinion pieces published in January 2021

- Fassil Hailu: [Hawks and doves: The great divide over the war in Tigray](#)
- Emebet Getachew; Mehari Taddele Maru; Yohannes Gedamu: [Could a National Dialogue Solve Ethiopia's Political Crisis?](#)
- Ahmed Hassen: [Is Ethiopia coming together or falling apart?](#)
- Farid Abdulhamid: [How neoliberalism is fanning the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia](#)
- Simon Tisdall (senior foreign affairs commentator of The Guardian): [Ethiopia's leader must answer for the high cost of hidden war in Tigray](#)
- Paulos Tesfagiorgis: [AU Commission chair's stance on Ethiopian civil war sabotages the union's peace mission](#)
- Maaza Mengiste: [Ethiopia's Long War](#)
- Robert Rotberg: [A pogrom is happening in Ethiopia](#)
- Kjetil Tronvoll: [Ethiopia re-enters the abyss of war](#)
- Richard Reid: [Ethiopia's current crisis is rooted in a long history of regional and ethnic defiance towards the political centre](#)
- Washington Post, The Post's View: [Ethiopia's leader won the Nobel Peace Prize. Now he's accused of war crimes.](#)
- Saba of Axsum: [Don't call me Woyane. I don't deserve it](#). Our own Tigrayan students tell me that this opinion piece translates exactly the feelings of their generation!

Annex 2. Additional media articles not directly cited in this paper (8 January – 2 February 2021)

- Daily news can be followed through the [Situation Reports of EEPA](#)
- Arte, 8 January: [Sudan: Die Tigray fliehen aus Äthiopien](#) [in German]
- The New Humanitarian, 12 January: Ethiopia: [A partial view of the humanitarian fallout emerges in Tigray](#)
- Reuters, 14 January: [Major violations of international law at Tigray refugee camps: U.N.](#)
- Globe & Mail, 17 January: [Refugee camps are torched and hospitals looted as starvation looms in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)
- Le Monde, 18 January: [« Les gens meurent de faim » : en Ethiopie, le Tigré au bord du désastre humanitaire](#) [in French]
- BBC, 19 January: [Ethiopia Tigray crisis: Fear of mass starvation](#)
- Al Jazeera, 19 January: [Starvation crisis looms as aid groups seek urgent Tigray access](#)
- Reuters, 20 January: [Ethiopians dying, hungry and fearful in war-hit Tigray: agencies](#)
- New York Times, 22 January: [On 'Rooftop of Africa,' Ethiopia's Troops Hunt Fugitive Former Rulers](#)
- Mediapart, 22 January: [En Ethiopie, la France partagée entre business et défense des droits humains](#) [in French] (if interested, we have an [English translation](#) of this article at hand)
- The Guardian, 24 January 2021: [Fabled ark could be among ancient treasures in danger in Ethiopia's deadly war](#)
- Der Spiegel, 24 January: [Krieg in Äthiopien »Hunderttausende könnten verhungern«](#) [in German]
- NPO Radio 1, 25 January: [In Tigray is aan alles tekort](#) [in Dutch]
- BBC, 25 January 2021: [Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: 'My wife died giving birth to twins while we hid'](#)
- Associated Press, 26 January 2021: [Witnesses: Eritrean soldiers loot, kill in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)
- EUobserver, 26 January: [Finland to lead EU diplomacy on Ethiopia](#)
- Le Figaro, 26 January: [Éthiopie: au Tigré, la guerre réveille le spectre de la famine](#) [in French]
- Radio France Internationale, 26 January: [Tigré: l'Érythrée engagée dans les combats malgré les dénégations](#) [in French]
- Associated Press, 27 January: [US says Eritrean forces should leave Tigray immediately](#)
- Morning Star, 27 January: [Ethiopian government accused of threatening to kill Tigrayans that refuse to join ruling party](#)
- Der Standard (Wien), 28 January: [Äthiopiens angeblich „beendeter Krieg“](#) [in German] (PDF available on request)
- Associated Press, 28 January: [US 'directly' presses Eritrea to withdraw forces from Tigray](#)
- Eritrea Hub, 28 January: [Eritrea's mass mobilisation for a "final offensive" in the Tigray war](#)
- Irish Times, 29 January: [Conflict in Tigray: 'What we don't know could be even more disturbing'](#)
- Associated Press, 30 January: [Ethiopia says Tigray back to 'normalcy'; witnesses disagree.](#)
- Associated Press, 31 January: [Fugitive Tigray leader reportedly speaks out after months](#)
- Bloomberg, 1 February: [Ethiopia May Engage Private Creditors After Debt Review](#)

- Ajazeera, 1 February: [In Pictures: Eritrean refugees caught in crossfire in Ethiopia](#)
- Trouw, 2 February: ['Mijn stadje Hagere Selam in Tigray is leeggeroofd door soldaten'](#) [in Dutch]
- BBC, 2 February: [Tigray crisis: Ethiopia region at risk of huge 'humanitarian disaster'](#)
- Washington Post, 2 February: [Tigray opposition parties assert 50,000-plus civilian deaths](#)

Notes

¹ <https://theconversation.com/ethiopias-tigray-region-has-seen-famine-before-why-it-could-happen-again-150181>

² Before the installation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the country was organised in large provinces, that incorporated populations of various ethnicity, as documented also on maps dating back to imperial times. As of the early 1990s, the structure of the country was totally reorganised along ethnic borders (federalism), and the bilingual Tigrinya-Amharic parts of the ancient Gondar and Wollo provinces were transferred to Tigray, just like the Afar-speaking areas of Tigray and Wollo formed the Afar region. The Amhara nationalists use the current conflict to try and incorporate the Tigrinya-speaking parts of the previous Wollo and Gondar provinces into the Amhara region. See: Labzaé, M., 2020. «Tedjemerwal » : ressorts sociaux, enjeux matériels et significations locales d'une entrée en guerre. Politique Africaine Novembre 2020, 7196; Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 52 - 11 January 2021

³ Nyssen, J., 2021. Late 2020 personal diary of the war on Tigray. Paper submitted to the HBS Special Issue on the Tigray war (Ethiopia).

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348356294> Late 2020 personal diary of the war on Tigray

⁴ <https://sabafaxsum.medium.com/dont-call-me-woyane-i-don-t-deserve-it-5e6541d5912f>

⁵ Interview in "Trouw", 2 February 2021. <https://www.trouw.nl/buitenland/mijn-stadje-hagere-selam-in-tigray-is-leeggeroofd-door-soldaten~bd90cd9d/>

⁶ France Diplomacy: Ethiopia - Situation in Tigray (29 January 2021).

<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/ethiopia/news/article/ethiopia-situation-in-tigray-29-jan-2021>

⁷ Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General - on Ethiopia, 2 February 2021.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-02-02/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general-ethiopia>

⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 13 January 2021. Daily Noon Briefing Highlights: Ethiopia. <https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-ethiopia-10>

⁹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/91459/%20We%20need%20humanitarian%20access%20to%20Tigray%20as%20urgent%20first%20step%20towards%20peace%20in%20Ethiopia

¹⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/extreme-urgent-need-starvation-haunts-ethiopias-tigray/2021/01/17/3d219faa-589e-11eb-acc5-92d2819a1ccb_story.html

¹¹ See these dramatic photos of some of the 44 187 IDPs in Shire, two months after Ethiopian PM's operation "law and order" is finished: <https://twitter.com/Kuluhama/status/1356631617519943681>

¹² See this photo on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumex#/media/File:Rumex_nervosus.jpg

¹³ <https://eritreahub.org/ethiopias-government-appears-to-be-wielding-hunger-as-a-weapon>

¹⁴ <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/01/23/after-two-months-of-war-tigray-faces-starvation>

¹⁵ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_access_210120_snapshot_tigray02.pdf

¹⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/91459/we-need-humanitarian-access-tigray-urgent-first-step-towards-peace-ethiopia_en

¹⁷ <https://ethiopianembassy.be/deputy-prime-minister-and-foreign-minister-demeke-mekonnen-confers-with-eu-vice-president-joseph-borrell/>

¹⁸ <https://www.devex.com/news/eu-to-dispatch-humanitarian-negotiator-to-ethiopia-after-aid-suspension-98934>

¹⁹ <https://euobserver.com/foreign/150774>

²⁰ <https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-central-african-republic-ethiopia-myanmar>

²¹ <https://www.nrc.no/news/2021/february/statement-on-tigray/>

²² <https://twitter.com/GebrekirstosG/status/1356234165293821953>

²³ Such as in repeated messages by the Ethiopia State of Emergency Fact Check, related to the rule of law operations being undertaken in Tigray Region by the FDRE Federal Government

<https://twitter.com/SOEEFactCheck>

²⁴ The full hearing can be seen here https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/afet-deve-joint-meeting_20210126-1645-COMMITTEE-AFET-DEVE_vd (starting at 16:52). Devex summarised the meeting as follows on 27 January 2021: [Ethiopia calls for 'perspective' from donors over Tigray conflict.](https://www.devex.com/news/eu-calls-for-perspective-from-donors-over-tigray-conflict)

-
- ²⁵ Jon Abbink: The Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia: Post-War Ramifications and International Response. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/01/tigray-conflict-ethiopia-ramifications-international-response/>
- ²⁶ MSF, 29 January: Ethiopia: "If hospitals can't be accessed, then people die at home" (<https://blogs.msf.org/bloggers/albert/ethiopia-if-hospitals-cant-be-accessed-then-people-die-home>); UNICEF, 27 January: 12 weeks into the conflict, 'deeply troubling' situation for children in Tigray (<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/12-weeks-conflict-deeply-troubling-situation-children-tigray>).
- ²⁷ Video of killed kids in downtown Mekelle (የኢትዮጵያ; urban district 15, behind Bureau of Education): https://twitter.com/hayet_alem/status/1355182116787654658.
- ²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=sXp2qJVRB64&t=371s>; a translation of the interview to English has been published: <https://www.tghat.com/2021/01/20/massacre-and-silenced-voices-in-axum-an-eyewitness-account/>.
- ²⁹ <https://twitter.com/SteezyMario7/status/1352459835787370497> and <https://twitter.com/zeaxumawit/status/1352471389740011520>
- ³⁰ <https://www.youuav.com/news/detail/202012/46513.html>. The EEPA Situation Report No. 64 (23 January 2021) provides a summary of this Chinese article that uses the UAE/Tigray case as a promotion for its "Pterosaurus" drones. https://www.eepa.be/?page_id=4237
- ³¹ Bistandsaktuelt: Kvinne i Tigray, Etiopia: – Jeg ble plyndret, andre ble drept [in Norwegian]. <https://www.bistandsaktuelt.no/nyheter/2021/etiopia-sivile-i-tigray-klager-pa-overgrep-fra-soldater/>
- ³² https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict-rape-idUSKBN29R2HV?fbclid=IwAR3OXVql87AS82L4rQIGONPrgoM-xwa3ULnGKK6vxcVuBdlQyeGe96_dgbl
- ³³ <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/united-nations-special-representative-of-the-secretary-general-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-ms-pramila-patten-urges-all-parties-to-prohibit-the-use-of-sexual-violence-and-cease-hostilities-in-the/>
- ³⁴ Source: <https://twitter.com/MapEthiopia/status/1352488102191894529>
- ³⁵ <https://www.fanabc.com/english/joint-taskforce-established-to-investigate-raised-concern-over-violence-against-women-in-tigray/>
- ³⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN29Q21I>
- ³⁷ <https://eritreahub.org/eritreas-mass-mobilisation-for-a-final-offensive-in-the-tigray-war>
- ³⁸ <https://twitter.com/KjetilTronvoll/status/1355468562782183427>
- ³⁹ <https://twitter.com/BronwynBruton/status/1354885214179385347>
- ⁴⁰ See Nevsun on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevsun_Resources
- ⁴¹ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Report-Images-show-latest-attack-on-Ethiopia-15877454.php>
- ⁴² <https://www.unhcr.org/admin/hcspeeches/600052064/statement-situation-eritrean-refugees-ethiopias-tigray-region.html>
- ⁴³ See for instance this article on Euronews: Young Eritreans Would Rather Risk Death at Sea Than Let Their Leaders Take Their Freedom. <https://www.euronews.com/2019/08/09/young-eritreans-would-rather-risk-death-at-sea-than-let-their-leaders-take-their-freedom-v>
- ⁴⁴ Hatney [አቶ - "my aunt"] - released 29 January 2021
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN1nbxSG9HE&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR03gQswmKvxuNv4zIF6TYRiD_bEWCaSwEDGkjDC1jihqOz4xWhRGVpx1U
- ⁴⁵ Tigraway [ትግራይ - "Tigrayan"] - released 25 December 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niCyQUA39u0>
- ⁴⁶ Hizbi Tigray [ህዝብ ተግራይ - "People of Tigray"] - released 25 December 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dflr5KOCTB4>
- ⁴⁷ Footing has emerged on 2 February 2021 of the shelling by Eritrean tanks of the Amanuel church on a mountain peak near Negash <https://www.tghat.com/2021/02/02/the-shelling-of-a-tigrayan-church-footage/>
- ⁴⁸ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/ethiopia-tigray-nejashi-mosque-conflict-damage>
- ⁴⁹ Appeal for the salvation of the cultural heritage of Tigray. <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/ethiostudies/news/appeal2021.html>
- ⁵⁰ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/01/17/churches-mosques-tigray-vandalised-looted-ethiopian-purge/>
- ⁵¹ <https://www.catholicus.org/2021/01/22/ethiopian-church-delegation-massive-damage-looting-in-adigrat-diocese/>
- ⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQO392fPkRk>
- ⁵³ <https://www.tghat.com/2021/02/02/tigray-president-calls-on-tigrayans-to-keep-fighting/>
- ⁵⁴ See note 30.

⁵⁵ Mulugeta Gebrehiwot on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulugeta_Gebrehiwot

⁵⁶ Alex de Waal on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_de_Waal

⁵⁷ "They Have Destroyed Tigray, Literally": Mulugeta Gebrehiwot speaks from the mountains of Tigray. <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2021/01/29/they-have-destroyed-tigray-literally-mulugeta-gibrehiwot-speaks-from-the-mountains-of-tigray/>; the webpage includes the recording of the telephonic interview, and full transcript.

⁵⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55476831>

⁵⁹ Sudantribune [in Arabic], 16 January 2021

<https://www.sudantribune.net/%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AF>

⁶⁰ <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ukq3hfUshAOa0ZDcSI22WHbfC6PnKtX&ll=12.67859938513579%2C37.008318866796884&z=8>; Alrayanews, 17 January 2021

https://alrayanews.net/?p=1574&fbclid=IwAR1i_9Ao5eCBxsfMGz9SczSR_Y4ZuOKc4xP05Tzu0AihoSS9QnIrDCnsmhQ

⁶¹ Should most probably be understood as "40 km into the contested zone at the border between Sudan and Ethiopia"

⁶² Daily News Egypt, 16 January 2021 <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2021/01/16/ethiopia-not-allowed-to-impose-fait-accompli-in-gerd-issue-sudanese-official/>

⁶³ <https://apnews.com/article/eritrea-abiy-ahmed-africa-ethiopia-somalia-6f0f97e18bef1d6e4a20a1cde75d0acb>

⁶⁴ We are the world - "a new song": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOETqf12FP8&feature=youtu.be>

⁶⁵ Sign the scientists' appeal : "Tigray (Ethiopia) - In absence of major international diplomacy and rescue, towards a repeat of the great famine of 1984-1985"

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScn3C6gaqCr2ExzbpSqXjd9oTRbO2ffd06_xJDusfBLahaT2A/viewform

⁶⁶ Avaaz petition: "Allow immediate and full humanitarian access and stop starvation in war-affected Tigray" https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/en/the_ethiopian_authorities_including_the_ministry_of_allow_immediate_and_full_humanitarian_access_to_waraffected_tigray_to_prevent_famine/?tNJbYcb Sharing with friends and colleagues is very important for an effective result; it can be done through email, Facebook or Twitter after signing.

⁶⁷ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-TYad2OUZVPkR2Mfo-SeZ-Kwt4s97pSO/view>